WAR DEPARTMENT,

Washington, December 3, 1855. SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the army for the past year, and to lay before you the reports of the heads of the several bureaus of the War Department, and communications from other officers of the army-

The authorized strength of the army now posted) is 17,867 officers and men, the accompanying table, prepared in the Adju-tant General's Office, show that, at the date of the latest returns, the actual strength was 15,752. The recraiting service is now progressing satisfactorily, however, and it is be lieved that in a few months the disparity between the authorized and actual strength of the army-2,115-will be nearly overcome. The number of colistments made doring the twelve months ending September 30 was 10,546. The number of persons offering to enlist, and who were refused on account of minority and unfitness for service, were 26,522. The number of casualities in the army by deaths, dis-charges, and desertions, during the same period,

The very numerous applications for the discharge of minors—so many of which have succeeded within the past year—renders neces-sary that some step should be taken to check the growing evil, and the serious expense to which the government is thereby subjected. The regulations are sufficiently stringent on the subject of the enlistment of minors; but recruiting officers are frequently deceived by the appearance of the recruit, and the false representations respecting his true age. In cases where deceptions of this character have been practised, the contract should be considered binding, or the recruit should be required, at the time of enlistment, to swear that he is either of full age, or, being a minor, that he has neither parent nor guardian. A modification to this extent of the existing law respecting the discharge of minors, (5th section of the act of September 28, 1850) would, it is believed lessen the impositions which are now practised, and protect the government from no inconsiderable

The general distribution of the troops re mains, for the most part, as indicated in the last annual report. Am ing the changes of most importance are the following: The four additional regiments authorized by the act of March 3, 1855, have been recruited and organized. Seven companies of the 1st cavalry have recently returned from an expedition into the Sioux country, and the regiment will winter at Fort Leavenworth, where it will be in position for ulterior operations in the spring. The 2d cavalry has been sent to the department of Texas to replace the six companies of the 2d iragoons, transferred to the department of the

The 9th infantry, (riflemen,) designed for service in the department of the Pacific, has been embodied at Fort Monroe, and held under instruction preparatory to a campaign which it was proposed it should undertake as soon as the season would permit through the Indians on the head-waters of the Missouri and tributaries of the Columbia river, from which exhibition of our power among those remote tribes it was expected a beneficial influence over them would result; but in accordance with the necessity communicated by a letter from General Wool, commanding the department of the Pacific, dated November 3, and this day received at the War Department, that regiment will be diverted from the proposed campaign by the over-land route, and be dispatched with the least delay by way of the isthmus to reinforce the command engaged in the suppression of Indian hostilities in Oregon.

The 10th infantry, (riflemen,) with the exception of one company attached to the Sioux expedition, has been ordered to the military stations on the Upper Mississippi. A portion be employed to establish a post on the Red river of the North, near the northern boundary last session of Congress appropriating \$5,000, a sum altogether inadequate for that object. Six companies of the 2d infantry have taken post at Fort Pierre, on the Upper Missouri. Continued Indian difficulties on the Oregon route have rendered it necessary to retain in which regiment it was contemplated to send to the Pacific coast.

Efforts are still in progress for the removal of the remnant of the Seminole tribe from Florida. The troops there have been kept actively employed in exploring the country by land and water, and in opening roads. By these means much important information respecting the territory in possession of the Indians has been gained, which will greatly facilitate future operations. All intercourse with these Indians has been strictly prohibited, and it is believed that they have not, in any instance, passed the

line of observation occupied by the troops. In the departments of the West, Texas, New Mexico, and the Pacific, Indian hostilities have been of frequent occurrence.

For the purpose of chastising the Sioux Indians implicated in the massacre of a detachment of United States troops in August of last year, and to protect from Indian incursions the western frontiers of Nebraska and Kansas, and the emigrant routes leading from the Missouri river to the west, a military force was which are general, as to the amount of the pay sent into the country inhabited by the Sioux, and emoluments of a great majority of officers late in the summer, under the command of in active service. In the present condition of Brevet Brigadier General Harney. On the 3d of September that officer, with a portion of his command, engaged a party of the Brule receive much larger allowances than others, and, band of the Sioux nation, and, after a short conflict, completely routed them. Eighty-six justifies, and these, which are but exceptional Indians were killed, and a large number taken prisoners. The papers and property captured leave no doubt that this band was concerned in the massacre of the detachment above referred to, as well as in the murders and depre- their compensation is made up of many items, dations committed upon emigrants, and in the which vary according to circumstances, and robbery of the public mail.

In the departments of Texas, New Mexico, and the Pacific, military expeditions have been shall be fully considered, the result will, I am sent against the Indians guilty of outrages confident, show that the officers of the army upon the persons and property of the frontier are, on the average, less liberally compensated inhabitants and emigrants within those sec- than those who pursue any other occupation tions of country, and in several cases summary | demanding equal capacity and acquirements. punishment has been inflicted by the troops upon the offending tribes.

The details of these operations will be found in the papers accompanying this report. The mail steamer just arrived at New York has brought advices from the department of the Pacific to November 5th, by which I regret to learn that Indian hostilities of a much more serious character than the difficulties in that department, referred to above, or than from the official reports previously received, there had been reasons to apprehend, have occurred in the Territories of Oregon and Washington. The letters of the governor of the Territory, of October 24, and of the commanding general of the department of the Pacific. ovember 3, of which copies are herewith submitted, furnish the only official information on the subject in the possession of this department. It will be perceived that, to meet the

nies, or about 1,200 men. The department, at this distance, and in the absence of more definite information, especially in regard to the extent of the combination among the hostile tribes, cannot judge troops may be necessary. This is a matter which must be necessarily left to the military commander in the department of the Pacific, who has repaired to the theatre of hostilities. to take with them. With five depots, pro- Engineer himself, under the act establishing His presence there will obviate difficulties perly located, the distribution could be made an Engineering Bureau in this department, has which might otherwise arise on the subject of more frequently, and in small quantities; been stationed at Washington. I, therefore,

rank and command between officers of the the troops would thus be less encumbered with recommend such revision of the act in question

volunteers and regular forces.

The alacrity with which the volunteers have responded to the call of Governor Curry gives ssurance that their aid will be as efficient as it has been prompt, and it is hoped that their continuance in the military service, to the great interruption of their ordinary pursuits, will be limited to the shortest possible duration, by the arrival of reinforcements which have been ordered to the regular troops of that depart-

From a recent report of the commanding general of the department of New Mexico, it

imits assigned them.
Service in Indian campaigns, though little alculated to excite the military ardor of the by greater privation than belongs to warfare with a civilized foe. The galantry, zeal, and devotion of both officers and men have been repeatedly, within the last year, put to the seequalled the anticipations which past conduct arranted, and have renewed their claim to the gratitude of those whose flag they bear and in whose service they have suffered.

The unusual extent of the operations above detailed has necessarily cansed large expenditures, which must exceed the appropriations made for the ordinary wants of the military service-an incident to which appropriations made upon estimates prepared so long is ad

vance are always subject.

My attention has recently been called to the ractice, in the settlement of accounts at the reasury, of charging sums due in past years to the current appropriations. It is deemed preferable that the settlement of old accounts should be provided for by appropriations for arrearages, and that the practice above reerred to be checked, since, so long as it prevails, the appropriations for current expenses

the necessary consequence.

In my last report I suggested several measures which I deemed necessary to preserve and increase the efficiency of the army.

The principal of these was a revision of the laws regulating rank and command, and those fixing the organization of the army. In rela tion to the evils there shown to be inherent n the present system. I need only say that additional experience has demonstrated their existence more clearly, while it has given no reason to distrust the advantages which were hoped from the changes indicated. That the right of command should follow rank by one certain and determinate rule; that officers who hold commissions which entitle them to the command of troops should not, at any early period of service, be placed permanently in po-sitions on the staff, which afford no opportunity for increasing military knowledge or confirm ing military habits; that troops organized equipped, and necessarily employed for the ame service, should not be divided into differ ent arms; that those serving on foot with regi mental organization and bearing muskets of rifles should not be divided into artillery and infantry, nor mounted men, armed and equip ped alike, be divided into dragoons and cay alry; that engineers should not be divided into two corps, with a nominal distinction of engineers and topographical engineers, though their acquirements, capability, and duties are so entirely alike that it has been found necessary to adopt an arbitrary rule assigning to each a part of the duties of both :- these propositions are the basis of the principal recom mendations submitted in my last report. The appear too clear to me to need to be enforced by argument, and I hope that the evils which he bare statement of the facts exposed will not be suffered to exist after the subject shall have secured the considerate attention of Congress. A measure scarcely inferior in importance to

those which relate to rank, command, and or ganization, is that which has in view to increase the efficiency of the army by retiring from active service those officers who are no longer of this regiment, when the season admits, will their profession affords little opportunity for atto personal low rate of compensation allowed for their serof Minesota, agreeably to an act passed at the vices indicates that it was fixed in connection with the idea of a permanent tenure, it would scarcely seem to be just, abruptly to discharge them without any provision for the future. Nor at East Pascagoula, Mississippi, has been would such course be consistent with the gratitude due to those who, amid the dangers and the department of the West the 6th infantry, by many years of faithful service, or by wounds received in battle. As, however, the claims of public good, so nothing can justify a system which retains men in office for which they have quence of the provisions of law contained in become disqualified. When age, wounds, or other casualties of service have stripped an of ficer of the power to discharge the duties of a station which in earlier life he adorned, a fust consideration for his own fame and a due regard for the public welfare demand that he should give place to one whose mental and physical activity is equal to the station, and who, stimulated by early promotion, would not

fail to emulate the honorable fame of him whom he succeeds. As one of the recommendations intimately connected with this subject, I have to renew that made in my former reports for an increase of the compensation of army officers, and a re

vision of the laws respecting their allowances. That this measure has failed heretofore to secure the attention which is, in my opinion, due to it, I attribute to the misconceptions, the laws regulating the pay and allowances of officers, some may, under certain circumstances, indeed, more than the nature of the service cases, have given rise to a general impression that the compensation of the officers is much higher than it actually is. Perhaps the error would have been less prevalent were it not that render it difficult to compute the amount in all cases with certainty; but whenever the subject

I also renew the recommendation that the provisions of the act of August 4, 1854, increasing the pay of the rank and file of the army, be extended to all enlisted men, some few of whom are, by the military signification of the words used in that statute, excluded from the benefits that were probably intended for all who come under military obligations by enlistment.

I commend to consideration the represents tions of the Surgeon General respecting the necessity for an increase of the medical corps. Such increase is required in consequence of the subdivision of our troops; and as the want of medical officers renders necessary the employment of citizen physicians, often at a higher compensation than that of a surgeon of the army, the new appointments would be at the Principal Engineer, and in his absence the tended with no additional expense. I, there-

fore, recommend the adoption of the measure. I concur with the Quartermaster General in reemergency, the governor has ordered out a commending the adoption of five military store mounted volunteer force of seventeen compakeepers to his department. At present there is but a single depot of clothing and camp and garrison equipage, and as the supplies for the whole army have to be despatched therefrom to each company, the distribution can only be what volunteer reinforcements to the regular large quantities, so that the companies are embarrassed in their movements, and the expense of transportation is increased by the large amount of stores which they have

diminished. By the 7th section of an act in addition to the several acts for the establishment and regulation of the Treasury, War, and Navy De-partments, approved May 1, 1820, it is provided that no land shall be purchased on account of the United States, except under a law authorizing such purchase. Although the steady progress of our frontier westward, and the advance of our military posts with it, has rendered it frequently necessary to abandon old sites, and occupy new ones, the prohibitio appears that all the Indian tribes within his to purchase land has not until recently been command have concluded treaties with the the cause of much embarrassment, since governor of the Territory, and retired to the the troops were operating in territories where nearly all the land was already the property of the Government. In Texas, however, the case is different; there this Government owns no soldier, is attended by equal hazard, and even land, except such as it may have acquired by purchase for specific objects, and the greater number of our military posts stand upon the property of private persons or of the State. barrassments have arisen from this cause, erest test, and they have on all such occasious and I have therefore to recommend that the act above cited be so amended as to permit this department, under such limitations as Congress may deem proper, to purchase such land as may be required for the sites of military

I have again to ask attention to the necessity of legislation to authorize this department to sell useless military sites. Two statutes have been enacted for this purpose, but neither according to the contemporaneous construc tion given them, is applicable to the largest class of cases that now embarrass the depart ment. According to that construction, the act of March 3, 1819 (3 Stat., 520,) applies only to sites then in the possession of the United States, and that of April 28, 1828, (4 Stat. 264,) applies only to lands conveyed to the United States for military purposes; neither including reservations from the public domain which were not occupied as military sites on must prove insufficient, and deficiency bills be the 3d of March, 1819. Owing to this omis sion, when the troops find it necessary to abandon a post of this description, the de partment cannot sell the land upon which the buildings and improvements of the abau doned post are located, but can only sell the buildings to be torn down and removed, and, of course, the price obtained bears no propor tion to their value. I hope that authority wil given the department in such cases to sell a portion of the land with the buildings, and use the proceeds for the establishment of new posts in such advanced positions as it may be

ecessary for the troops to occupy.

In transmitting the annuel report of the Board of Commissioners of the military Asy lum for the past year, I take occasion to trans mit, also, their reports for three preceding years, which were made annually to this de partment, pursuant to regulations, but which

have not been heretofore forwarded. The view which these reports give of the sults of the institution does not fulfil the anti cipations which were entertained at the time its establishment. Although early means were taken to give notice of their rights to all entitled to the benefits of the Asylum, by orders published to the army, and by handbil sent to every post office in the United States, yet the aggregate number of inmates of the several branches of the Asylum was, at the dates of the respective annual reports, 50, 73, 77, and 87; in addition to the last number six men, having families, were receiving relief without being quartered at the Asylum. In the mean time, the treasurer's accounts show hat the net receipts were \$490,140 17; that the cost of sites, buildings, furniture, stock, &c., was \$280,183 75; and that the amount of current expenses was \$91,314 19. If to the current expenses of the several branches there be added interest on the cost of buildings, &c., the average cost of maintaining each nmate will be found to exceed \$500-an ex- standard weapon. pense so great as to indicate the propriety of seeking some proper mode of effecting a re-

The buildings on the site near Washington capable of fulfilling its requirements; but as city, with the addition thereto, now far adrate of increase, will seek admission into the Asylum for many years to come.

The branch which was established in 1852 deemed disirable with regard to that at Har privations of military life, have been disabled rodsburgh, Kentucky. This branch was founded at a heavy charge upon the Asylum fund, and s maintained at an expense much exceeding individuals must always be subservient to the the advantages conferred upon the disabled the army appropriation acts of August 31 1852, section 18, and of March 3, 1853, section 14, the propriety of declaratory legislation in the case is suggested.

I would again call attention to the propriet of additional legislation which shall place the widows and orphans of the officers and soldiers of the army on an equality with those of the officers and sailors of the navy.

I also again invite attention to the necessity of legislative provision for the more prompt settlement of the accounts of disbursing officers by intrusting to a single accounting officer the audit of the whole, instead of requiring disbursing officers to render accounts to two Auditors as at present. The confusion and embarrass ment consequent upon the division of duties involving injurious delays in final settlement have heretotore been brought to the attention of Congress, and it is hoped that the evils represented will not be suffered to exist much

Under the appropriation, made at the last session, for the importation of camels, an officer of the army and one of the navy have been animals of the different breeds most likely to ment, be useful in our climate. By the kindness of the Secretary of the Navy, a storeship destined for the Mediterranean with naval supplies was placed at the disposal of this department, to bring in a return cargo of camels and dromedaries; and from the last report received from the officer charged with the execution of the commission, it is expected that as many of these animals as the vessel will transport will be shipped for the United States in February Recent inquiries respecting the use of these animals in the Crimea confirm me in the in the military service in our country.

For detailed information respecting the Mili tary Academy. I refer to the reports of the Chief Eugineer and of the Board of Visiters, herewith transmitted, which exhibit a satisfac tory view of the condition of that institution I concur in the recommendations of the former. for the establishment of a new professorship, in order that the chaplain may be relieved o the duties of professor of ethics and English cavalry; and for the allowance of light artillery pay to the Instructor of artillery.

The act of March 16, 1802, requires that the Corps of Engineers be stationed at West Point and constitute the Military Academy, and that next in rank, shall superintend the said increased nearly thirty-fold; and owing to this extension of the Academy, and to the demand for the services of engineers in the field and on permanent works, the affairs of the Academy made at long intervals, and, consequently, in are mainly administered by professors holding no military commissions and officers detailed from the army generally. Thus the post has long ceased to be exclusively an engineer station, as originally contemplated, and the Chie

baggage, and the expense of their movements as will render its provisions consistent with the changes introduced by subsequent legisla-

tion and the necessities of the service.

The sea-coast defences have during the past year been steadily pressed toward completion to the extent of the means granted by Congress for that purpose. In no part of our mili tary system is the exercise of wise foresight more necessary than in the prosecution of these works, and I recommend to favorable consider ation the remarks of the Chief Engineer upon

this subject.

The preparation of the armament for these works is in advance of the construction.

The recommendation heretofore made for ar appropriation to commence the fortification of Ship island is renewed. The importance of this work as connected with the defence of the approaches to New Orleans, and the command of the inner channel of communication between the Mississippi river and Mobile harbor, has been augmented both by the increased value of that navigation in the time of peace, and by the introduction of light-draught war steamers, which would render this approach still more available for the operations of an enemy than when in 1814 it was selected as the line of hostile descent.

The physical geography of the vast region drained by the Columbia river indicates that at some day a great city must arise at the point which shall become its commercial entrepot Attention has been heretofore called to the necessity of fortifying the entrance of the Columbia river, and I would again commend it to attention and favorable consideration,

For information in regard to the operations of the Ordnance Department I refer to the accompanying report of the Colonel of Ordnance; taking occasion to renew the recommen dations I have heretofore made for an appro priation for arsenals in Texas and New Mixico. and on the north Pacific coast in Oregon o Washington Territory, as may be found mos advisable; also for a national armory for the fabrication of cannon and projectiles. My views in regard to the expediency of these measures, as heretofore given, remain un changed; the reasons then advanced in support of the recommendations remain in full force and are referred to instead of being repeated

At the national armories the manufacture of mooth-bored arms has been brought to a close. New models for all small arms have been adopted upon the rifle principle, and embrac ing the improvements described in my las report, and it is expected that the armories will at work upon the new arms before the close of the year.

In the mean time, improved ammunition, to which mainly is due the increased range recently obtained by small-arms, has been issued to troops bearing grooved arms, and its use in actual service has fully realized all the advantages that were anticipated.

Among the new models for small-arms is a pistol of increased length of barrel, furnished with an attachment to the stock, which may be ustantly applied, and which converts it into a carbine. Should this prove as valuable in actual service as the experiments made now indicate, no difference will be needed between the arms and equipments of dragoons and those of light cavalry, but the whole, armed with this weapon, will be rendered, in celerity of movement, equal to light cavalry, and in combat, as efficient as heavy dragoons. It is thought that this arm will be found, also, well adapted to the use of sappers and miners, of men working in the trenches, and of light artilleromen.

Under provisions made last year for th purchase of breech-loading rifles, many samples of this weapon have been examined, and number of various patterns purchased, and placed in the hands of troops for trial in the field. It is deemed indispensable to subject them to this test before adopting any as a

The distribution of arms to the militia of the several States for the current year has been made according to representation in Congress, as prescribed by the 7th section of the army city, with the addition thereto, now far advanced towards completion, will probably af-In fixing the quota of the District of Columbia or 150 men-a number | and the Territories, which by the act is left to greater than that which, judging from the past | the discretion of the Executive, it was determined that the District and the Territories should receive the quota of States having the least representation in Congress. That proat East Pascagoula, Mississippi, has been vision of the act which required this department to equalize, as far as practicable, the numbe of arms distributed to the States, was executed by issuing from the United States arsenals to each State and Territory which had received less than 2,000 stand so many arms as would bring their supply up to that number.

Arrangements have been made to convert arms of the old model issued to the States, when desired by them, into rifled arms of the new model, with pereassion lock and primer at tached; the expense of the alteration to be charged to the States and deducted from their several quotas of the appropriation for the annual supply of arms.

Under the appropriation made at the last ession, editions of cavalry and light infantry tactics have been procured for the militia, and are in course of distribution.

At the last session of Congress an act was assed directing the Sccretary of War to cause be constructed, on a site to be selected by the President of the United States, a suitable uilding for the care and preservation of the ordnance and arms and accountrements of the volunteers and militia of the District of Columbia, and for the care and preservation of the military trophies of the revolutionary and other wars, and for the deposite of newly invented and model arms for the military service; for which purpose the sum of \$30,000 was appro printed. In the execution of this act, a site was elected and a plan and specifications conforma ble to the means granted, prepared, and bids directed to proceed to the East to obtain for the work duly invited by public advertise

A contract has been entered into, but at so late a period that no progress has been made in the construction of the building.

The work upon the military roads in th Territory of Minnesota has generally made satisfactory progress. Those in Utah, Washington, and Oregon, for which appropriations were made last year, have been completed according to the plans adopted. Those for which ppropriations were made at the last session in Kansas, Nebraska, Washington, Oregon, and New Mexico have not yet been put under conbelief that they will be found highly valuable struction. No report has yet been received of the completion of the necessary preliminary

The survey of the northwestern lakes ha been prosecuted with skill and energy. The several parties employed on this work have been almost exclusively engaged during the past season in Lakes Michigan and Superior and the St. Mary's river. A large area has been surveyd, more than a thousand buoys have been located to mark dangerous reefs and studies; for the appointment of an instructor of shoals, and materials have been gathered for the minute and reliable charts so necessary to

the navigation of those inland seas. The appropriations for river and harbor im ovements have, with few exceptions, been xhausted, or reduced so low as not to be effective for future operations. Snag and dredge boats are usually built out of appropriations Academy. By this act the cadets were made part | for special works; and when, therefore, the of the corps, and the whole number of officers fund is expended, it has been deemed proper and cadets was limited to twenty. Under subset to sell such boats, machinery, and materials, quent legislation the number of cadets has been and apply the proceeds to the benefit of the work for which the money was appropriated The rapid deterioration and constant expens attendant on the preservation of boats does not permit that they should be kept beyond a short period on the contingency of future apopriations being made. Under these cirustances, and for these reasons, the snagoats on the western rivers have been sold, and the amounts drawn for the construction, equipment, and repair of those boats from the ap-

circumstances, will, have to be adopted in relation to the dredge boats on the northern lakes and coasts of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Under the authority given in the army appropriation act of August 4, 1854, sec. 5, to use the appropriation for the removal of the Red river raft in such way as would secure navigation in and around said raft, an examination of the obstructions and surrounding locality was instituted, and a plan adopted to secure navigation around the greater part of the raft, through Docley's bayon, and an agent, with the necessary machinery, is employed in its

execution. Reference is made to the documents accompanying the report from the Topographical Bureau for the progress made on the improvement of western rivers and lake harbors, the construction of military roads, and the survey of the Florida canal, and to the report of the Chief Engineer for the work on the Atlantic and Gulf harbors and rivers.

The reports of the officers employed under the appropriations made for explorations and surveys to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi river to the Pacific ocean, were sub-mitted to Congress on the 27th of February last, with a report from this department, giving a general sketch of the country over which they extended; a recapitulation of their results, and a comparison of their distinguishing characteristics, from which it was concluded that, of the routes examined, the most practicable and economical was that of the 32d parallel. A report is herewith submitted from the officer in this department charged with the revision of the work of the several parties, and I refer to it for additional information derived from materials collected, on a further exami nation of them, by himself, and the several officers who made the particular surveys, as well as for the results of explorations carried on during the past year.

When the report was made in February last many of the maps, drawings, and scientific papers intended to form part of the report, and which could only be prepared after an elabo rate examination of the materials collected. had not been completed for want of time, and it became necessary to substitute hastily-prepared drawings and preliminary reports. was particularly the case with regard to the work on the route of the 35th parallel. A minute examination of the material collected in that survey has resulted in showing the route more practicable than it was at first rep resented to be, and in reducing to nearly one half the original estimates of the officer in charge of the survey, which indeed seemed when they were submitted to be extravagant, and were noted in the report from this depart

ment as probably excessive.

Another feature of interest developed in the course of the further examination of the work on the route of the 32d parallel is that the Colorado deserts, which is traversed by the route for a distance of 133 miles, and which, in the report referred to, was noted as consisting of a soil that needed only water to render it highly productive, is, in fact, the delta of the Colorado river, and, according to barometric levels, is so much lower than that stream as to be easily irrigated from it. Thus there every reason to believe 4,500 square miles of soil of great fertility, of which nearly one half is in our territory, may be brought into cultivation in one unbroken tract along the route.

Under the appropriation made at the las session for the continuation of these surveys and other purposes, three parties have been in the field during the past season.

One of these was directed to make examina

ons connected with the routes on the 321 and 35th parallels. This survey has greatly im proved the aspect of the former route by chang-ing the line for nearly half the distance between the Rio Grande and the Pimas villages. on the Gila river, from barren ground to cul tivable valleys, and entirely avoiding a jornade of eighty miles, which occurs in that section also, by the discovery of an eminently practi cable route through cultivable country from the plains of Los Angeles along the coast, and through the Salinas valley to San Francisco. these points was by way of the valley of San Joaquin and the Great Basin.

The attention of this party was also directed to an examination into the practicability of procuring water along certain parts of the route where it is now deficient. The report shows that it may be obtained by common wells at distances of about twenty miles.

From the result of this exploration, moreover it appears practicable to obtain, at a small expense, a good wagon road, supplied with water by common wells from the Rio Grande down the San Pedro and Gila, and across the Col orado desert. Such a road would be of great advantage in military operations, would facilitate the transportation of the mail across that country, and relieve emigrants, pursuing that route from much of the difficulty and suffering which they now encounter.

A second party was charged with the duty of testing the practicability of procuring water by artesian wells on the Llano Estacado, ar arid plain which has been heretofore described as a desert. The experiment has so far demonstrated its practicability as to leave little oubt of its final success; it will be continued, however, until the problem shall have been fully solved.

The examinations into the feasibility causing subterranean streams to flow upon the surface from artesian wells, though undertaken in connection with the practicability of a rail rond, if they should prove entirely successful will have a value beyond their connection with that object, in the reclamation of a region which is now a waste, and its adaptation to the pastoral and perhaps the agricultural uses of

The third party was directed to conduct as exploration from the Sacramento to the Columbia river, with a view to ascertain the practicability of a route to connect the valleys of those rivers. The officer in charge has reported the successful completion of the duty, but has not given details. The same officer has been directed to make a reconnoissance of the Sierra Nevada in the vicinity of the head branches of the Carson river.

The prosecution of instrumental surveys, ac companied by investigation into many branches of physical science simultaneously over lines of such length, and embracing such an extent of latitude, is a work of greater magnitude than any of the kind hitherto undertaken by any nation, and its results have not only proved commensurate with the amount of work done, but possess a value peculiar to the scale on which it has been conducted, as affording a basis for the determination of some questions of science which no number of smaller and detached explorations could have furnished. Should means granted, pursuant to the estimate in the report referred to, for continuing these explora ons. I have every confidence that the expend iture will be well repaid by these contributio

to our knowledge of the interior of the country. The facts developed by these surveys, added to other information which we possess, suggest some considerations of great interest with re gard to our territory on the Pacific. They exhibit it as a narrow slope of an average width of less than 150 miles of cultivable land, skirting the ocean for a distance of 1,000 miles: rich in those mineral productions which are tempting even beyond their value, and which would be most readily turned to the use of an invader; drained by two rivers of wide-spread branches, and with sea-ports lying so directly upon the ocean that a hostile fleet could comnence an attack upon any one of them within a few hours after being described from land or if fortified against attack, so few in number that comparatively few ships would suffice to

blockade them. This territory is not more remote from the propriation for the respective rivers were thus principal European States than from those parts creased thickness of the marble in the walls

they belonged. And a like course, under like military supplies, and some of those States have extensive corridor required by the plan, but not onies and possessions on the Pacific, which would greatly facilitate their operations against it. With these advantages, and those which the attacking force always has of choice, of time and place, an enemy possessing a considerable military marine could, with comparatively little cost to himself, subject us to enormous expenses in giving to our Pacific fron-

tier that protection which it is the duty of the General Government to afford. In the first years of a war with any great maritime power the communication by sea could not be relied upon for the transportation of supplies from the Atlantic to the Pacific States. Our naval peace establishment would not furnish adequate convoys for the number of storeships which it would be necessary to employ, and storeships alone laden with supplies could not undertake a voyage of twenty thousand miles, passing numerous neutral ports, where an enemy's armed vessels even of the

smallest size, might lie in wait to intercept The only line of communication then would be over-land, and by this it would be impracticable, with any means heretofore used, to furnish the amount of supplies required for the defence of the Pacific frontier. At the present prices over the best part of this route, the expense of land transportation alone for the annual supplies of provisions, clothing, camp equipage, and ammunition for such an army as it would be necessary to maintain there, would exceed \$20,000,000; the land transpor tation of each field 12-pounder, with a supply of ammunition for one year, would cost \$2.500; of each 24-pounder and ammunition \$9.000; and of a sea-coast gun and ammuni tion, \$12,000. The transportation of ammu nition for a year for 1,000 sea-coast guns would cost \$10,000,000. But the expense of trans portation would be vastly increased by a war and at the rates that were paid on the northern

the above estimates would be trebled. The time required for the overland journey would be from four to six months. In point of fact however, supplies for such an army could not be transported across the continent. On the arid and barren belts to be crossed, the limited quantities of water and grass would soon be exhausted by the numerous draught animals required for heavy trains, and over such dis tances forage could not be carried for their sub

frontier during the last war with Great Britain

On the other hand, the enemy would send out his supplies at from one seventh to one wentieth the above rates, and in less time. perhaps in one-fourth the time, if he should btain command of the isthmus routes.

Any reliance, therefore, upon furnishing that part of our frontier with means of defence from the Atlantic and interior States after the com mencement of hostilities would be vain; and the next resource would be to accumulate there such amount of stores and supplies as would suffice during the continuance of the contest, or until we could obtain command of the sea. Assigning but a moderate limit to this period, the expense would yet be enormous The fortifications, depots, and storehouses would necessarily be on the largest scale, and the cost of placing supplies there for five years would amount to nearly \$100,000,000. many respects the cost during peace would be equivalent to that during war. The perishable character of many articles would render it per haps impracticable to put provisions in depot for such a length of time, and in any case there would be deterioration amounting to some millions of dollars per year.

These considerations, and others of a strictly nilitary character, cause the department to examine with interest all projects promising the accomplishment of a railroad communication between the pavigable waters of the Missis sippi and those of the Pacific ocean. As military operations depend in a greater degree upon rapidity and certainty of movement than upon any other circumstance, the introduc tion of railway transportation has greatly improved the means of defending our Atlantic and inland frontiers; and, to give quisite that the facility of railroad transpor tation should be extended to the Pacific coast. Were such a road completed, our Pacific coast. instead of being further removed in time and less accessible to us than to an enemy, would be brought within a few days of easy communication, and the cost of supplying an army there, instead of being many times greater to us than to him, would be about equal. We would be relieved of the necessity of accumulating large supplies on that coast, to waste, perhaps, through long years of peace, and we could feel entire confidence that, let war come, when and with whom it may, before a hostile expedition could reach that exposed frontier an ample force could be placed there to repel any

attempt at invasion. From the results of the surveys authorized Congress, we derive at least the assurance that the work is practicable, and may dismiss the apprehensions which, previously, we could not but entertain as to the possibility of defending our Pacific territory through a long war

with a powerful maritime enemy. The judgment which may be formed as to the prospect of its completion must control our future plans for the military defence of that frontier, and any plan for the purpose which should leave that consideration out of view would be as imperfect as if it should disregard all those other resources with which commerce and art aid the operations of armies.

Whether we shall depend on private capita and enterprise alone for the early establish ment of railroad communication, or shall promote its construction by such aid as the gen ral government may constitutionally give whether we shall rely on, the continuance o peace until the increase of the population and resources of the Pacific States shall rende them independent of aid from those of the At lantic slope and Mississippi valley; or whether we shall adopt the extensive system of defence above referred to, are questions of public policy which belongs to Congress to decide. Beyond the direct employment of such

road for military purposes, it has other relations to all the great interests of our confederacy, political, commercial, and social, the prosperity of which essentially contributes to the common defence. Of these it is not my purpose to treat further than to point to the additional resources which it would develop. and the increase of population which must attend upon giving such facility of commun cation to a country so tempting to enterprise much of which having most valuable products is beyond reach of market.

I refer to the reports of the officer in charge of the Capitol and Post Office extensions for detailed information in regard to those works. The progress of the former has been serisously retarded in consequence of deficiency in the supply of marble for the exterior. The work s, however, so far advanced that the interio finish must now be considered. The original plan and estimate was for a finish similar to that of the main building, but this style would not be a fair sample of the present state of architectural skill, and it is supposed would not fulfil the wish of Congress; it has, therefore, been thought proper to have prepared for inspection specimens of en-caustic tiling, instead of brick and sand-stone, for the floor; of painting, instead of white-washing, for the walls and ceilings These and other contemplated improvements. not included in the original plan and estimates, may be introduced to a greater or less extent, as Congress may provide. Modifications have already been made, such as the inroduction of ornamental iron ceilings in the principal rooms, the substitution of iron for wood in the frames for the roofs and the doors and windows of the basement story, an inmade available for the improvements to which of our own country whence it would derive its specially provided for by law, and a costly and rule, and thus allow the majority to effect a

contained in the original estimate. At the last session Congress adopted a plan and made an appropriation for a new dome to the Capitol. No estimate of the cost of the work had been submitted, nor has any yet been prepared. In fact, at that time only the exterior had been studied, and a sketch made showing the general effect of the whole building as completed. The study of the details has since been entered into, and I refer to the report of the officer in charge for a narrative of his operations, as well as for a full description of the contemplated structure, which promises to be an object of rare architectural beauty. The resources exhibited in the machinery de signed to raise the enormous masses of iron composing the dome, and to place them accurately in their elevated positions, reflect the highest credit upon the capacity and skill as an engineer of the officer in charge of the

Notwithstanding a very unhealthy season the work on the aqueduct designed to supply this city with water has been prosecuted suc-cessfully, and to the extent of the means appropriated. A larger appropriation will asked, in order to realize the benefits of t the benefits of this great enterprise as early and as econominally as possible. Should the appropriation be granted at an early period in the session, the operations can be continuously carried on; but if it should be delayed until the usual period of making the annual appropriations, the spring—the most favorable season for work—will be lost, and the operation be again subjected to interruptions resulting from the auumnal diseases which prevail in the locality. I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

your obedient servant, JEFF'N DAVIS, Secretary of War. To the President of the United States.

Congressional.

THIRTY-FOURTH CONGRESS. FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, January 15, 1856.

The Senate was not in session to-day.

House of Representatives. The CLERK called the House to order at twelve o'clock, and the Journal of yesterday was read.

Mr. VALK, of New York, moved that there be

call of the House; which motion did not pre vail—yeas 55, nays 107.

Mr QUITMAN, of Mississippi, who had yes terday withheld his vote from Mr. RICHARDSON, gave the reasons why he should cheerfully and heartily support that gentleman so long as there should be any prospect of his election.

The House then resumed the business of vot-

ing for Speaker, when the one hundred and twelfth vote was had, and resulted as follows: Mr. Banks..... 92

Richardson..... Fuller..... 34 Pennington..... Whole number of votes...........207

Necessary to a choice10 No person having received a majority of the hole number of votes given, there was no elec-Mr. MILLSON, of Virginia, during the preced

ing ballot, remarked that he had been supporting.
Mr. Richardson for upwards of six weeks, during which time he had voted for him more than one hundred times. He had thus given proof, which perhaps in the history of the world had never before been given, of his sincere desire to elect that gentleman to the high position for which he had been proposed as a candidate. On which party or on what person the blame of the failure to elect might fall, or whether on any, it would be vain to inquire. One thing he did know: that there was a separate and equal responsibility upon every member to elect the necessary officers of the House, in order that they might proceed to the dispatch of the public business. He did not agree with those gratilemen who had said that they ore been given, of his sincere desire to elect that with those gentlemen who had said that they would vote for none other than Mr. RICHARDSON, nor with those who, if they had not said so it words, had at least proclaimed in their votes their lantic and inland frontiers; and, to give determination to vote for none other than Mr. us a sense of security from attack upon the BANKS and Mr. FULLER. He did not concur in the opinion, which had been several times ex pressed here, that the Government might be car ned on very successfully even though the House might feil to effect an organization. He thought that such an experiment would be apt to feil; he certainly did not wish it to be a successful one. A King of England once endeavored to carry on the Government without the aid of Parliament but the people decided that he should not. He did not wish an American President to be more suc-cessful than was the king to whom he had referred.

There were many gentlemen in the House for whom he would cheerfully vote. There were others for whom, if not cheerfully, he would willingly vote. He did not, then, in again giving his vote for Mr. RICHARDSON, wish to be considered as in any degree approving the determination of gentleman to vote for none other than him. He had voted for that gentleman most cheerfully and earnestly, but had never intended that his vote should be regarded as a ratification or approval o the opinions entertained by the honorable member from Illinois. The gentleman and himself differed, but this did not in any degree lessen his confidence in his integrity, ability and honesty. But, as he had understood that those gentlemen with whom he had been associated had declared that they would adhere to the original nominee of their caucus, he had risen merely to protect himself from the inference that he approved their determination to the extent, perhaps, of allowing the affairs of the Government, foreign and domestic. to fall into confusion rather than that the House should be organized under the leadership of any other than that of a certain gentleman. But his single vote, given to any other gentleman, would not be likely to be felt or to produce any successful result. He was willing now, as he had always een, to sid in any proper conservative organiza tion of the House; and, in again voting for Mr. Richardson, he wished it to be understood that he was in no wise committed to the line of policy which seemed to oblige gentlemen to pursue a single course, but stood free to dispose of his vote where it could be effectively felt.

He thought that too much importance had been attached to the question of the choice of a Speaker. The Speaker was not the representative of gentlemen on this floor, and they did not become his constituents. It was not absolutely necessary that he should concur in opinion with them upon all questions. The Speaker was the representa-tive of his district, and would remain such after his elevation to the chair. They were not, then, his constituents, and had no right to exact from him a rigid conformity to their individual views. One thing was certain, that if the Speaker was to be the representative of principle, then they would never have a Speaker; for there was no principle which controlled a majority of the member

Mr. WASHBURN, of Maine, submitted the folwing resolution:
Resolved, That the House will proceed immediately to the election of a speaker viva voce; and if, after the roll shall have been called three imes no member shall have received a majority f the whole number of votes, the roll shall again be called, and the member who shall then receive the largest number of votes provided it be a majority of a quorum, shall be the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the thirty fourth

Mr. JONES, of Tennessee, supposed that every member's mind was made up as to the resolution and he therefore suggested to the gentleman from daine that he call the previous question.

Mr. WASHBURN replied that it was his

intention to call the previous question; but as the gentleman from North Carolina desired to say a single word he would refrain from doing so at Mr. CLINGMAN desired to say a word in

explanation of the vote he should give on the pending resolution. So far as the adoption of the plurality rule was concerned, he could see no objection to it in principle. It was a mere proposition to change the mode of election. They might adopt the majority rule at one time, and at another they might adopt the plurality rule, as had recently been done in many of the States. Feel-ing a strong anxiety to see the House organized, he had feit willing to change the law and allow an election by the plurality rule. But although he had repeatedly expressed the opinion that the House had better adopt that rule, he now felt at liberty to do as he pleased on this as on all other questions of expediency. For two weeks previous to Saturday last he was in favor of and had endeavored to get his friends to adopt the plurality